

**Amendments to the Claims:**

The following Listing of Claims replaces all prior listings, and versions, of claims in the present application.

Listing of the Claims

1-23 (Canceled)

24. (Currently amended) A method of qualitatively evaluating a digital audio signal, comprising:

calculating, in real time, in continuous time, and in successive time windows, a quality indicator ~~which~~ vector, wherein:

said quality indicator vector is obtained from said digital audio signal that represents an analog audio signal, and ~~consists of~~

said quality indicator vector comprises a vector associated with each of said time window windows, and ~~wherein~~

said quality indicator vector has a dimension at least one hundred times less than the number of audio samples in a time window, said dimension being from 1 to 10; and

qualitatively evaluating said digital audio signal on the basis of said quality indicator vector.

25. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 24, wherein the generation of a quality indicator vector employs the following steps for a reference audio signal and for the audio signal to be evaluated:

a) calculating for each time window the spectral power density of the audio signal and applying to it a filter representative of the attenuation of the inner and middle ear to obtain a filtered spectral density,

b) calculating individual excitations from the filtered spectral density using the

frequency spreading function of the basilar scale,

- c) determining the compressed loudness from said individual excitations using a function modeling the non-linear frequency sensitivity of the ear, to obtain basilar components,
- d) separating the basilar components into classes, preferably into three classes, and calculating for each class a number C representing the sum of the frequencies of that class, said vector consisting of said numbers C, and
- e) calculating a distance between the vectors of the reference audio signal and the audio signal to be evaluated associated with each time window to evaluate the deterioration of the audio signal.

26. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 25, wherein the generation of a quality indicator vector for the reference audio signal and for the audio signal to be evaluated employs the following steps:

- a) calculating N coefficients of a prediction filter by autoregressive modeling,
- b) determining in each time window the maximum of the prediction residue as a difference between the signal predicted with the aid of the prediction filter and the audio signal, said maximum of the prediction residue constituting said quality indicator vector, and
- c) calculating a distance between said vectors of the reference audio signal and the audio signal to be evaluated associated with each time window to evaluate the deterioration of the audio signal.

27. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 24, wherein the generation of a quality indicator vector employs the following steps for the reference audio signal and for the audio signal to be evaluated:

- a) calculating for each time window the spectral power density of the audio signal and applying to it a filter representative of the attenuation of the inner and middle ear to obtain a frequency spreading function in the basilar scale,
- b) calculating individual excitations from the frequency spreading function in the basilar scale,

- c) obtaining the compressed loudness from said individual excitations using a function modeling the non-linear frequency sensitivity of the ear, to obtain basilar components,
- d) calculating  $N'$  prediction coefficients of a prediction filter from said basilar components by autoregressive modeling, and
- e) generating for each time window a quality indicator vector from only some of the  $N'$  prediction coefficients.

28. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 27, wherein the quality indicator vector comprises from 5 to 10 of said prediction coefficients.

29. (Currently amended) A method according to claim 24, wherein the ~~generation~~ calculation of ~~[[a]]~~ said quality indicator vector employs the following steps for at least the digital audio signal to be evaluated:

- a) calculating a temporal activity of the digital audio signal in each of said time ~~window~~ windows,
- b) calculating a sliding average over  $N_1$  successive values of the temporal activity, and
- c) retaining ~~[[the]]~~ a minimum value of  $M_1$  successive values of the sliding average.

30. (Currently amended) A method according to claim 29, wherein said quality indicator vector ~~consists of~~ comprises said minimum value.

31. (Currently amended) A method according to claim 29, wherein said quality indicator vector ~~consists of~~ comprises a binary value that is the result of comparing said minimum value with a given threshold.

32. (Currently amended) A method according to claim 29, including calculating a quality score by determining a cumulative time interval during which said minimum value is below a given threshold  $S_1$  ~~and/or~~ or by determining the number of times per second said

minimum value is below a given threshold  $S'_1$  or by determining both said cumulative time interval and the number of times per second.

33. (Currently amended) A method according to claim 29, wherein said minimum values are generated at the same time for ~~[[the]]~~ a reference audio signal and for the digital audio signal to be evaluated and a quality vector is generated by comparing the corresponding minimum values for the reference audio signal and for the audio signal to be evaluated.

34. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 24, wherein the generation of a quality indicator vector employs the following steps for at least the audio signal to be evaluated:

- a) calculating a temporal activity of the signal in each time window,
  - b) calculating a sliding average over  $N_2$  successive values of the temporal activity,
- and
- c) retaining the maximum value from  $M_2$  successive values of the sliding average.

35. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 34, wherein said quality indicator vector consists of said maximum value.

36. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 34, wherein said quality indicator vector consists of a binary value resulting from comparing said maximum value with a given threshold  $S_2$ .

37. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 34, wherein a deterioration indicator vector is generated by comparing the maximum value obtained for the reference audio signal and the corresponding maximum value obtained for the audio signal to be evaluated.

38. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 24, wherein the generation of a quality indicator vector calculates, at least for the audio signal to be evaluated, the Fourier transform in successive blocks of  $N_3$  samples constituting said time windows and the minimum value of the

spectrum in  $M_3$  successive blocks, said minimum value of the spectrum constituting a quality indicator vector.

39. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 38, including a step of evaluating the introduction of noise into the audio signal to be evaluated by comparing the value of said minimum value of the spectrum in  $M_3$  successive blocks associated with the audio signal transmitted and the maximum value of the  $M_3$  minima obtained in the same  $M_3$  successive blocks associated with the reference audio signal.

40. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 38, including a step of evaluating the introduction of noise into the audio signal to be evaluated by comparing the value of said minimum of the spectrum in  $M_3$  successive blocks with an average value of the minima of the spectrum obtained in blocks anterior to said  $M_3$  successive blocks.

41. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 24, including calculating, at least for the audio signal to be evaluated, a quality indicator vector consisting of a spectrum flattening parameter that is the ratio between an arithmetical mean and a geometrical mean of the components of the spectrum of the signal.

42. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 41, including using an indicator of detection of deterioration of the audio signal by the introduction of wideband noise by comparing said spectrum flattening parameter between the reference audio signal and the audio signal to be evaluated.

43. (Currently amended) A method according to claim 24, wherein the digital audio signal to be evaluated is an audio signal transmitted digitally.

44. (Currently amended) A method according to claim 24, wherein the digital audio signal to be evaluated is a digital audio signal to which has had digital coding ~~has been~~ applied.

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45. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 44, wherein said digital coding is bit rate reduction coding.